THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The suggestions made by Confederation of Indian Industry to boost exports include-sctting up an apex National body to develop a country strategy; greater freedom and autonomy to the Exim Bank; revamping of the ECGC and building of India brand.

(b) Export performance is influenced inter-alia by international market conditions, supporting infrastructurul facilities, credit availability and policy framework and the Government is taking all necessary steps to sec that there is a steady increase in the growth of exports. Export promotion is a continuous process and measures are being taken based on interaction with trade, industry and export promotion organisations.

Trade Barriers by industrialised Countries

1233. SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether at the second ministerial meeting of WTO at Geneva held in May, 1998 India raised objections to the unilateral imposition of trade barriers by industrialised countries on environmental, labour, health and Psytosanitary standars; and

(b) if so, whether India received support from other developing countries in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. At the second Ministerial meeting concern was expressed at the trend towards unilateral imposition of trade barriers by certain industrialized countries on inter alia grounds such as environmental, labour, health and Phytosanitary standards. It was pointed out that protectionist measures adopted by developed countries in various ways restrict market access for goods and services produced in developing countries.

During the deliberations, attempts by certain developed countries to introduce potentially protectionist issues, based on environmental considerations, were strongly resisted by India and other developing countries. The developing countries were of the view that economic growth should be given primacy in order in improve standards of living in poorer countries. Other developing countries also joined India in demanding that the industrialised countries should not resort to new protectionism, exploiting the problems encountered by certain developing countries in the wake of the financial crisis. This position has also been endorsed by the Conference which has recognized that 'keeping all markets open must be a key clement in a durable solution to these difficulties' and that the 'use of any protectionist measures' is to be rejected.

Setting up of a WTO Centre by Lift

1234. SHRI DEBABRATA BISWAS: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that LIFT is proposing to set up a WTO, Centre in order to study various aspects of the new international trade regime and establish a data base on latest trends;

(b) if so, details thereof; and

(c) by when the Centre is likely to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The proposed WTO Centre would be headed by an eminent expert in the field of international trade. The expenditure on this centre would be met out of the specific grants provided by the Government and the interest earned on corpus fund devoted to the LIFT by MMTC and PEC etc. The activities of the centre would be as follows:-

(i) To conduct research on specific policy related issues assigned by MOC from time to time.

(ii) To provide all necessary documents, research work relating to WTO negotiations.

(iii) To act as a storehouse and documentation centre for information/ data pertaining to WTO related issues.

(iv) To conduct short term courses, orientation courses and awareness programmes for familiarising members of the business community with WTO related issues.

(v) To bring out publications and handbooks for use of trade and industry.

(vi) Any other task assigned by the Govt, relating to WTO matters.

(c) The Centre is expected to become operational during the year 1998-99.

Shortfall in Growth Rate of Export

1235.SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether exports during the first ten months of 1997-98 have registered a negative growth of over 2 per cent over that during the corresponding period" in 1996-97;

(b) if so, the main reasons for the shortfall;

(c) whether Government have probed into the matter and what steps were taken to remove and eliminate factors responsible for decline in exports;

(d) if so, the details in this regard; and

(e) the resultant improvement in export performance during the following period?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Exports have not registered a negative growth in the first ten months of 1997-98. As per the provisional data received from the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCI & S), the exports have registered an increase of 2.4 per cent in Dollar terms and 6.3 per cent in Rupee terms during the first ten months of 1997-98 over the corresponding period last year.

(b) to (d) Docs not arise.

(e) As per the provisional data received from the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCI&S), the exports have registered an increase of 2.64 per cent in Dollar terms and 7.5 per cent in Rupee terms during 1997-98 over the corresponding period last year.

Piling of Toxic Wastes

1236.SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM:
SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government's attention have been drawn to the press news-item captioned "toxic wastes piling up in India" as reported in the Statement dated 28th April, 1998;

(b) if so, whether containers full of toxic substances and exported to India by other countries are lying unclaimed at several ports; and

(c) if so, the facts thereof and remedial steps Governments propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. As per the information received from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the status of hazardous wastes lying at some of the ports and container depots is given in the Annexure. *[See* Appendix 184, Annexure No. 41]

Existing facilities at various industrial units for disposal of these wastes in an environmentally sound manner have been surveyed by the Ministry of environment and Forests. Samples of hazardous wastes lying at various ports and container depots have been collected and their analysis is in progress.